IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A skeletal muscle protecting agent comprising a compound having inhibitory activity against squalene synthase or a salt thereof, or a prodrug thereof.

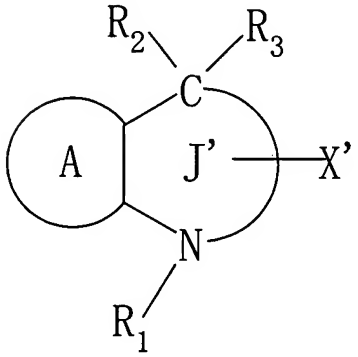
2. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, which is a skeletal muscle protecting agent which protects skeletal muscle from cell disorder.

3. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, which is a skeletal muscle protecting agent which protects skeletal muscle from cytotoxicity of other medicines.

4. (Original) The agent according to claim 3, wherein the other medicine is an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor.

5. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, which is a preventive and/or therapeutic agent for myalgia or rhabdomyolysis.

6. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, wherein the compound having inhibitory activity against squalene synthase is a compound represented by the formula:

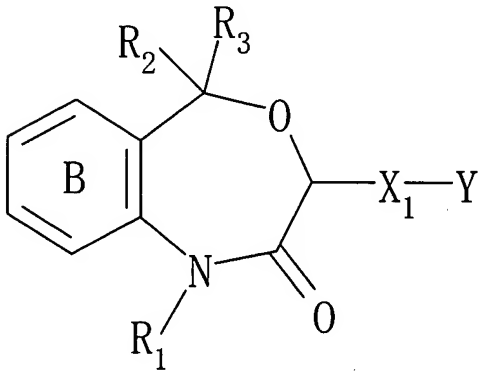


(I)

wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted hydrocarbon group, R_2 and R_3 are the same or different and a hydrogen atom, an optionally substituted hydrocarbon group or an optionally substituted heterocyclic group, X' is a substituent comprising an optionally esterified

carboxyl group, an optionally substituted carbamoyl group, an optionally substituted hydroxy group, an optionally substituted amino group or an optionally substituted heterocyclic residue having a hydrogen atom which can be deprotonated, Ring A is an optionally substituted benzene ring or an optionally substituted heterocyclic ring, Ring J' is a 7- or 8-membered heterocyclic ring having 3 or less hetero atoms, as atoms constituting a ring, and Ring J' may further have a substituent in addition to R_1, R_2, R_3 and X'.

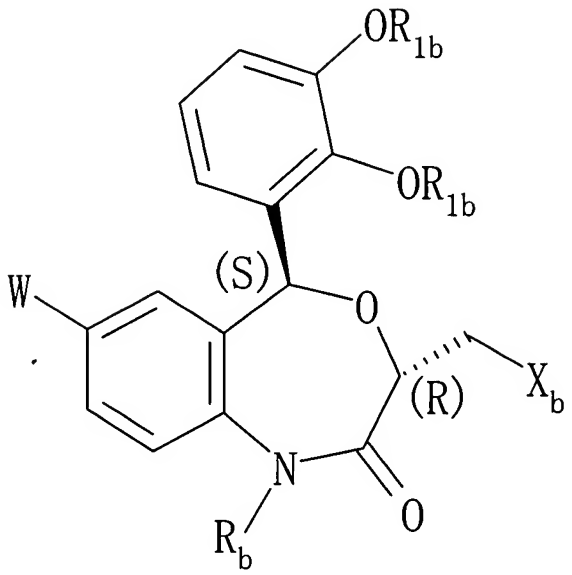
7. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, wherein the compound having inhibitory activity against squalene synthase is a compound represented by the formula:



(Ia)

wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom or an optionally substituted hydrocarbon group, R_2 and R_3 are the same or different and a hydrogen atom, an optionally substituted hydrocarbon group or an optionally substituted heterocyclic group, X_1 is a bond or divalent atomic chain, Y is an optionally esterified carboxyl group, an optionally substituted carbamoyl group, an optionally substituted hydroxy group, an optionally substituted amino group or an optionally substituted heterocyclic residue having a hydrogen atom which can be deprotonated, and Ring B is an optionally substituted benzene ring.

8. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, wherein the compound having inhibitory activity against squalene synthase is a compound represented by the formula:



(Ib)

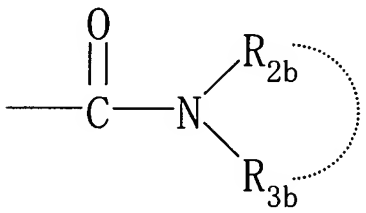
wherein R_b is a lower alkyl group optionally substituted with an optionally substituted hydroxy group, X_b is an optionally substituted carbamoyl group or an optionally substituted heterocyclic group having a hydrogen atom which can be deprotonated, R_{1b} is a lower alkyl group and W is a halogen atom.

9. (Original) The agent according to claim 8, wherein R_b is C_{1-6} alkyl which may have 1 to 3 substituents selected from a hydroxy group, acetyloxy, propionyloxy, t-butoxycarbonyloxy, palmitoyloxy, dimethylaminoacetyloxy and 2-aminopropionyloxy.

10. (Original) The agent according to claim 8, wherein R_{1b} is methyl.

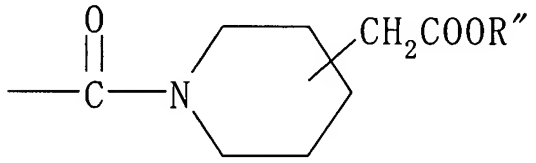
11. (Original) The agent according to claim 8, wherein W is a chlorine atom.

12. (Original) The agent according to claim 8, wherein X_b is a group represented by the formula:



wherein R_{2b} and R_{3b} are each a hydrogen atom, an optionally substituted hydrocarbon group, an optionally substituted heterocyclic group or an acyl group, or R_{2b} and R_{3b} may form, together with the adjacent nitrogen atom, an optionally substituted 5- or 6-membered nitrogen-containing heterocyclic ring which may contain 1 to 3 hetero atoms selected from a nitrogen atom, a sulfur atom and an oxygen atom, as atoms constituting a ring.

13. (Original) The agent according to claim 8, wherein X_b is a group represented by the formula:



wherein R" is a hydrogen atom or C_{1-4} alkyl.

14. (Original) The agent according to claim 1, wherein the compound having inhibitory activity against squalene synthase is N-[[(3R,5S)-1-(3-acetoxy-2,2-dimethylpropyl)-7-chloro-5-(2,3-dimethoxyphenyl)-2-oxo-1,2,3,5-tetrahydro-4,1-benzoxazepin-3-yl]acetyl]piperidine-4-acetic acid or N-[[(3R,5S)-7-chloro-5-(2,3-dimethoxyphenyl)-1-(3-hydroxy-2,2-dimethylpropyl)-2-oxo-1,2,3,5-tetrahydro-4,1-benzoxazepin-3-yl]acetyl]piperidine-4-acetic acid.

15. (Original) A skeletal muscle protecting agent comprising a compound having an action of suppressing the decrease of a geranylgeranylated metabolite in a muscular cell, or a salt thereof, or a prodrug thereof.

16. (Original) A method for protecting skeletal muscle, comprising administering an effective amount of a compound having inhibitory activity against squalene synthase, or a salt thereof, or a prodrug thereof to a mammal.

17. (Original) A method for protecting skeletal muscle, comprising administering an effective amount of a compound having an action of suppressing the decrease of a geranylgeranylated metabolite in a muscular cell, or a salt thereof, or a prodrug thereof to a

mammal.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Canceled)